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First Committee
6th meeting
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New York

Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Guani (Uruguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 65 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Westdal (Canada): On behalf of the delegation of Canada, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the vice-chairmanship of the First Committee.

At this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly — the first of the new millennium — it is appropriate that we take stock and that we seek overall perspective on our global progress in arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. That is easier said than done. Our situation is complex and dynamic, defying simple description. There are constant waves of events, apparent good news and apparent bad — an often bewildering barrage. There are deeper currents of change, some heartening and some not so. And there are tides deeper still in our affairs that are transcendent, enveloping and, often, invisible and imperceptible. Mere snapshots of the surface of our complex reality are often misleading and almost always insufficient.

It is thus with humility that I proceed to describe the Canadian vision of current truth in the business of this Committee. In doing so, I take the liberty of invoking the legacy of The Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who died a week ago. Throughout the 16 years that he led Canada, his commitment to nuclear disarmament was profound and active. In the Canadian delegation, we are inspired by his vision and are determined to honour it in action.

It is true that the years of hope and progress on disarmament in the immediate wake of the cold war were followed by discouraging setbacks, by re-rationalization of nuclear arsenals, by their conflation with national prestige, by widespread public apathy about the dangers of nuclear arsenals and, above all, by actual proliferation. But it is also true that this spring, in this house, our most important of all treaties, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), won resounding, skeptic-confounding reaffirmation. One hundred and eighty-seven nations, all but four in the world, achieved consensus agreement that NPT universality and compliance were essential. Nuclear-weapon States made an unprecedentedly direct commitment, an unequivocal undertaking, to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The Treaty's vital review process was strengthened, the 1995 promise of permanence with accountability was kept, and an impressive plan of action by the multilateral community and by the nuclear-weapon States was agreed. Canada welcomed that historic outcome not as an end but, rather, as a fresh start — a platform and common mandate for further progress towards a world free of nuclear arms.

It is true that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was the product of decades

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of hope and hard work in the Conference on Disarmament, has yet to win approval in important States and that more than a dozen ratifications are still required to bring it into force and that, therefore, all the hope and labour invested in its promise remain at risk. But it is also true that this historic Treaty has been signed by 160 countries and ratified by 63 of them, that there has been no testing for over two years now — and it feels good — that the CTBT Organization surveillance and verification network is building, that a de facto moratorium on testing is in effect among the five nuclear-weapon States and is respected by all, and that the political cost of tests — the bar against any further demonstrations of weapons capable of human extinction — is surely higher than it has ever been, and rising.

Canada wants that political cost to be, and to be seen to be, simply prohibitive. We want the bar against tests to be decisive. We want no more tests — none ever again. That is why we pressed for the Treaty's provision for sustained pressure for ratification, why we will join nations planning for a second conference, in accordance with the Treaty, here in New York next year, to promote early entry into force, and why we are appealing directly to the 14 Governments whose required assent for entry into force is still outstanding.

It is often overlooked that the NPT discusses not only nuclear weapons, but also, in its preamble, the means of their delivery. Missile proliferation is of obvious global security concern, and it is often linked to plans for national missile defence. It is true that such plans have provoked fears of unilateralism, a compromised or abandoned Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), strategic instability, a renewed arms race, and impaired prospects for nuclear arms control and disarmament. But it is also true that President Clinton's decision not to authorize the deployment of a nuclear missile defence system at this time took explicit account of the concerns and opinions of others, and of the danger of spurring new regional arms races. It is true that the ABM Treaty has been widely reaffirmed as a cornerstone of strategic stability and that energetic and creative efforts are gaining force to stem the spread of missiles bearing weapons of mass destruction, the proliferation of which motivates the potentially destabilizing quest for missile defence in the first place.

The missile technology control regime has, meanwhile, stepped up its action against proliferation. Initiatives to develop and promote broader multilateral confidence and norm-building measures are under way. Codes of conduct are in prospect. In Moscow earlier this year, Presidents Clinton and Putin agreed to establish a joint centre for the exchange of data from early-warning systems and notifications of missile launches. This joint United States-Russia mechanism could well form an important basis for a multilateral pre-launch notification and verification system involving all States with civilian or military rocket programmes.

It is true that States in North-East Asia and the Middle East have sought weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. But it is true as well that steady progress towards rapprochement on the Korean peninsula is being achieved, and, despite recurrent setbacks, we remain hopeful for peace in the Middle East.

It is also true, as we saw so clearly at the Millennium Summit last month, that the human family is growing ever more integrated, that there is health in us, that we are evolving common values of solidarity and human security — common creeds with which the very existence of nuclear arsenals capable of the destruction of all civilization and most life on earth is simply incompatible.

It is true that belief persists in the validity of nuclear deterrence and that nuclear weapons have been seen by some as symbols of status and national prestige. But it is also true, and deeply heartening, that Russia is engaged with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through the Permanent Joint Council and participates in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, that Presidents Putin and Clinton have agreed to restore a START momentum and have now launched a strategic stability cooperation initiative to build trust and counter proliferation, that great Power relations and prospects for sustained peace are now more promising than they have been for generations, and that NATO, with active Canadian commitment, is reviewing its non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament options, given the reduced salience of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the aggregate number of deployed nuclear weapons continues to drop. Russia has proposed reciprocal reductions to levels lower than those foreseen in the 1997 Helsinki Agreement, and the United Kingdom and France, for their part, have cut

their arsenal significantly, increased transparency and stopped making fissile material for weapons. We can all take real hope from this progress.

It is true that stocks of weapon-usable fissile material are mountainous, that some key control systems are foundering amid economic distress, and that the fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations are on hold, caught in the impasse at the Conference on Disarmament.

But it is true as well that there is robust collaboration between the United States and Russia in the control and disposal of excess plutonium. Indeed, we welcome their recent bilateral agreement on the management and disposition of plutonium no longer required for defence purposes, and we look forward to early ratification.

Moreover, the United States, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have launched a trilateral initiative to place excess weapons-grade material under IAEA supervision, and IAEA safeguards are being steadily reinforced. In this context, I am pleased to note that our additional protocol with the IAEA entered into force in Canada last month.

It is true that while immediate priorities are clear, the further route forward towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is obscured by uncertainty and, doubtless, risk. But it is also true that such risk pales beside the prospect we face on our present course, which, absent decisive disarmament progress, is the certainty of further nuclear proliferation. Since the nuclear age began, we have had no risk-free option. Those who fear the route ahead in steady, incremental disarmament need to weigh its risks against the huge danger we will face so long as it is imagined that cake can be eaten and still had too, that we can have nuclear non-proliferation indefinitely without nuclear disarmament.

(*spoke in French*)

As the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, said in his statement at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the risk of nuclear annihilation remains the greatest potential threat to human security. But despite the horrific potential of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, it is small arms, light weapons and landmines that are doing most of the killing these days.

Abundant, cheap and easy to use, small arms injure and kill thousands of people, mostly civilians, each year. Next year, however, a landmark international Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be convened. That Conference will yield, we hope, a much-needed international plan for concrete action, with a timetable for implementation designed to reduce the number of small arms and light weapons in circulation throughout the world, prevent problematic transfers, promote transparency and reduce the bloody cost these weapons exact — exacerbated armed conflicts, gross violations of human rights and social destabilization.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada hopes our collective progress against illicit small arms and light weapons might compare to the progress we have made together against landmines. Since the first meeting of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention banning landmines, held in Mozambique last year, burgeoning support for the principles enshrined in that pact has yielded tangible results. The use of anti-personnel mines is declining; international trade in them has all but stopped; production is in sharp decline, as is the number of new mine victims; stockpiles are being rapidly destroyed; States not yet party to the Convention are nonetheless acting to respect it; resources for global mine-action programmes are swelling; regional organizations, such as NATO's Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, for example, are doing hard, creative work; and the scope and impact of mine-clearance projects are increasing.

These heartening trends show how far and how fast we can move to enhance human security when we put people before States at the centre of our analysis and make the protection of civilians our paramount goal. I am therefore delighted by the announcement which Mr. Dhanapala made on Monday that the Department for Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) will host a discussion on disarmament as humanitarian action to explore further the links between disarmament and human security.

I deal last with the Conference on Disarmament because, as the Committee is aware, the alphabet brings Canada next, at the start of next year's session, to the presidency of the Conference.

Our sole multilateral negotiating forum in arms control and disarmament has been paralysed for two years. Thanks to the commitment and skill of Conference presidents from Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil and Bulgaria this last year, we are literally within a word or two of agreement on a work programme that includes the issues of a fissile material cut-off treaty, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The political cost for any State that would deny, and be seen to deny, the world community the disarmament now clearly within reach at the Conference on Disarmament is high and rising. Using the special opportunity and the particular responsibilities of a first President of a Conference on Disarmament session, we will do our utmost to get the Conference back to work. But progress must, as always, depend on the collective political will of Conference members.

We believe that global yearning for decisive disarmament progress cannot long be denied and that momentum is on our side. At the Conference on Disarmament and across the broad range of our non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament efforts, we will continue to seize opportunities as they arise, sustaining hope and active commitment, relentless in our pursuit of human security in a safer world.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): The Committee has already expressed its condolences on the passing of former Prime Minister Trudeau, and I would reiterate that we all share those feelings of grief.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): I am speaking on behalf of France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. It gives me pleasure to announce that our five countries have reached agreement on the text of a statement concerning security assurances for Mongolia as regards nuclear weapons. With permission, I would like to read out the text of the statement in order to place it on the official record of this Committee.

The statement is headed "statement on security assurances in connection with Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status". It reads as follows:

"France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America,

"Welcoming the declaration by Mongolia of its nuclear-weapon-free status,

"Taking into account Mongolia's status as a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear-Weapons, as well as its unique geographic status,

"Welcoming Mongolia's policies of developing peaceful, friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the States of the region and other States,

"Confirm the following:

"1. France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America reaffirm their commitment to Mongolia to cooperate in the implementation of United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/77 D of 4 December 1998 with respect to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

"2. France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America reaffirm their commitment to seek immediate United Nations Security Council action to provide assistance to Mongolia, as a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in accordance with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995) of 11 April 1995, if Mongolia should become a victim of an act of aggression or the object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used.

"3. France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America reaffirm, in the case of Mongolia, their respective unilateral negative security assurances as stated in their declarations issued on 5 and 6 April 1995 and

referred to in United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995) of 11 April 1995.

"4. The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation recall and confirm the legally-binding commitments undertaken by them with respect to Mongolia through the conclusion of bilateral treaties with Mongolia regarding these matters."

This statement was prepared by our five countries on the basis of Mongolia's status as a non-nuclear-weapon State party in good standing as regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We believe that the unique geographic status of Mongolia made it appropriate for our five countries to provide security assurances in this way, since Mongolia is unable to obtain the security assurances that are normally provided by protocols to nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties.

Having joined the consensus on resolution 53/77 D concerning Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status, the five nuclear-weapon States were pleased to work out an arrangement to provide these security assurances. It is our belief that the statement that I have just read into the record fully meets this need. We also believe that our actions further strengthen the NPT by demonstrating our flexibility in responding to the security concerns of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon States note that Mongolia's situation does not pertain to any other State.

The statement is not eligible for registration under Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. We wish to state clearly for the record, however, that the five nuclear-weapon States stand fully behind the assurances provided in the statement.

With the issuance of this statement, our five countries believe that we have fully carried out the commitment to Mongolia that we undertook, as nuclear-weapon States, consistent with the terms of resolution 53/77 D.

Our five countries plan to ask the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council to circulate this statement as an official document of their respective bodies. In addition, we will arrange for the statement to be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Estévez-López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): With this general debate, we are once again beginning the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly. We will be setting aside time to discuss the issues of disarmament and international security entrusted to us, and we will adopt or reject draft resolutions. The success of all that we do will depend to a large extent on how well we conduct our work here in the First Committee. That is why we are particularly pleased that Mr. Than has been elected to the chairmanship of the Committee: his diplomatic skills, together with his mastery of the issues with which we will be dealing, reassure us that we will be able to achieve the desired objectives. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

In the statements by the various delegations in the general debate it is traditional for us to congratulate one another on the progress — if any — made in the areas of disarmament and international security since we last met. Furthermore, it is customary to exhort the Members of the United Nations to make every effort to achieve progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the destruction of nuclear arsenals, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the elimination of chemical and biological weapons, controls on the manufacturing of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, conventional weapons and demining, and to offer our support for all the activities carried out in these areas by the United Nations. Every year we also adopt resolutions aimed at reducing the problems afflicting us, which the international community must confront. All of this falls within our purview.

Notwithstanding the progress that we have made over the years, it will be necessary for us to consider and take note of the fact that what we achieve or fail to achieve will redound to the benefit or detriment, not of the interests and existence of the First Committee, but of all of humankind. If I seem to be exaggerating, we should remember that we are talking about halting the manufacture of, and dismantling, weapons that jeopardize the safety and security of us all — the representatives gathered here within these four walls and the billions of human beings outside. We are talking about placing greater controls on the manufacture, sale and circulation of weapons which, however small they may be, are capable not just of destroying lives, but also of shielding activities

harmful to humankind, such as the production of, traffic in and sale of drugs.

We are also talking about putting an end to the manufacture and use of mines and other explosive devices that threaten lives and obstruct the process of reconstruction that follows the end of armed conflict, prevent many families from rebuilding their homes and deny them access to their fields, water sources, workplaces, schools, health services and other essential infrastructure.

We in the First Committee are talking about the right that all human beings have to live in nuclear-weapon-free zones: that is, the right that all of us have to live far from the danger inherent in the use of nuclear energy for destructive purposes. Yes, we can say in just a few words that we have come to the First Committee to talk about the right all of us have to life itself. It is pointless to banter about all these issues unless we act with political determination and commitment to translate into reality all that is proposed.

Enough has been said about who has greater or lesser fire power, and about who uses that fire power in legitimate self-defence or to sow international instability or regional instability. What we have to do here is to courageously face up to the responsibility that we all have, some to a greater and some to a lesser degree, that in the final analysis all of us have to achieve total and complete disarmament, to put a stop to illicit traffic in small and light weapons, as well as to establish greater control over their manufacture.

We must together come to grips with these things — not 80, 100 or 170 of us: no, I mean all 189 Members of the Organization. We must together come to grips with putting our house in order and this means guaranteeing international security through disarmament.

The drafts prepared by the group of interested States, organized by Germany, under the heading of "practical disarmament measures for consolidating peace" illustrates that when we are convinced that we must eliminate problems, it is possible to do so if we make sure that what we do comes paired with the political will required for attaining these goals.

That, in turn, explains why Guatemala, that, for over 40 long years, suffered the outgrowth of death, destruction and grief as a product of internal strife, once again appeals to all the members of the international community to pool our efforts in the fight that we are waging against nuclear, chemical, biological, small and light as well as conventional weapons, anti-personnel mines, and all that assaults people's life, safety and security.

We also urge all regions of the world that have not yet established nuclear-weapon-free zones to resolutely make strides towards setting them up.

Guatemala, since we are located in a part of the world free of these weapons, is enjoying the benefits that flow from that and believes that all countries the world over are similarly entitled.

Finally, we fully support and intend to work together with others towards preparing and holding the Conference on Illicit Trafficking in Small and Light Weapons to be held next summer. We ask the United Nations, especially the Department for Disarmament Affairs, to continue the process of strengthening the regional centres that answer to it inasmuch as these are the major source of support and will continue to be as we strive to attain the objectives we set for ourselves in dealing with the cluster of issues discussed under our agenda.

Mr. Mendez (Venezuela) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Mr. Chairman, may I congratulate you, as well as the other members of the Bureau, on your election to head the work of the First Committee. We are convinced that your experience and your firm commitment to the cause of disarmament are sufficient guarantees for our being able to make headway in dealing with the major issues assigned to the Committee. You can count on Venezuela's cooperation as we move forward with our work in the most efficient way.

We would also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Raimando González of Chile, who chaired last year's meetings so skilfully and efficiently.

We open the work of the Committee with renewed optimism amidst an international setting that would appear to offer prospects more favourable to the attainment of progress in the area of disarmament that can in turn benefit international peace and security. The successful conclusion of both the Millennium Summit as well as of the Sixth Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have created a climate more propitious for our pursuit of efforts designed to adopt specific measures aimed at

reducing nuclear weapons and eliminating sources of distrust.

The results achieved at both these conferences reaffirm the fact that multilateralism is nowadays the most appropriate instrument for promoting the quest for solutions to the enormous problems confronting humankind both in the realm of how to achieve peace as well as in the achievement of economic and social development in an age such as this, marked both by unprecedented opportunities as well as by unprecedented risks. In light of these facts, it is impossible to conceive of international security in unilateral or absolute terms. Quite the contrary, dealing with phenomena that assault international peace and security require the participation and cooperation of all our States so as to make progress towards global and consensus-based solutions to these problems.

The First Committee represents an ideal place for acting in concert with a sense of responsibility and urgency in examining the issues linked to disarmament and arms limitation.

Although the possibilities insofar as achieving a stable and secure world are enormous, we believe nonetheless that doubts and fatigue that have manifested themselves in recent years in the disarmament arena constitute one of the most discouraging aspects of this process. To reverse this trend we must see to it that the goals agreed upon at a variety of levels achieve fruition through a sustained effort and specific steps.

In this connection, we are concerned at the situation of inertia that marks the Conference on Disarmament which, once again, has proved unable to agree upon a work programme that will allow it to move forward in shouldering its responsibilities — the only multilateral negotiating forum.

To revitalize that body, we must indeed work in a spirit of flexibility and make relevant efforts to make possible the establishment of an ad hoc committee to examine the issues involving nuclear disarmament and begin negotiations, as early as possible, that may lead to the adoption of a treaty which would ban the production of fissionable material for nuclear weapons.

To strengthen these steps, Venezuela feels that member States might explore additional options such as would lead to the convening of an international conference to eliminate nuclear dangers or the holding of the Fourth Special Session devoted to Disarmament.

The results achieved at the Sixth Conference on the NPT reaffirm the commitment of the international community to promote, as soon as possible, practical measures designed to achieve disarmament, such as have been proposed by the coalition of countries in favour of a new nuclear agenda.

Without underestimating the difficulties and the existing limitations, the States Parties have made it possible to lend a fresh impetus to this process. What we now need is for the nuclear-weapon States to comply in an across-the-board manner with the obligations they have assumed as parties to these juridical instruments carrying out good faith negotiations with firm determination to smooth the way towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Only thus will we be able to translate into reality the obligations and rights incurred under the NPT and the sense of balance to which we all aspire.

As has already been stated, the next five years will be decisive in terms of the credibility and effectiveness of this system as an appropriate instrument for strengthening international peace and security.

Taking this approach, we hope that the States with the greatest nuclear arsenals will continue making efforts designed to achieve a greater reduction of strategic forces, by means of hammering out a new treaty in this arena through negotiations. In the same way, we deem it necessary that there continue to be an attitude of moderation to avoid any steps that might prejudice the integrity of existing agreements in the course of negotiations so as to achieve greater nuclear-weapons reductions.

For the last few years we have noted with satisfaction the progressive establishment of nuclear-weapon-free areas in various parts of the world. This reaffirms the importance that we, Member States, attribute to this step in the context of efforts being exerted in favour of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. This move towards greater security has been accomplished at the same time by a growing interaction amongst such areas — for example, Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba.

On the basis of these developments, it is our hope that the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas can be

proclaimed a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the near future. Venezuela supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. In this respect, we support the efforts of the Central Asian countries to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in their region. We hope that similar initiatives being promoted elsewhere will yield similar concrete results in the future. Venezuela welcomes the statement made by the representative of the United States on behalf of the five nuclear-weapon States concerning the security guarantees that have been made to Mongolia as a nuclear-weapon-free territory. This measure is an important step towards the full implementation of resolution 53/77 D in the context of strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

The gravity of the phenomenon of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its implications for the security of citizens and States has been recognized by the international community, which has warned that the phenomenon exacerbates the political and social instability of countries that have suffered armed conflict. As has already been said, the links between the illicit traffic in weapons and other manifestations of uncivilized social behaviour, such as terrorism and the illicit drug trade, allow this phenomenon to transcend issues of national security to become a problem affecting regional and international security.

The international community has begun to take systematic steps towards adopting measures to address this problem. The United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects is expected to make a major contribution to combating this illicit activity. On the basis of regional cooperation and experience, we support the establishment of a consensus-based political platform to control and reduce the excessive stockpiling of such weapons, which also represent a problem affecting human rights and the development of our countries.

In another vein, Venezuela supports initiatives to strengthen the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America, headquartered in Lima. We therefore feel that the Centre must be assigned the necessary resources so that it may efficiently carry out its important work.

Finally, I wish to reaffirm that, in our opinion, multilateral action is the most appropriate way to promote solutions to certain problems of common interest that, given their nature and scope, require collective responses based on dialogue and cooperation. In the field of disarmament, given its experience and legitimacy, the United Nations is the logical authority to promote the adoption of disarmament and arms-limitation measures ultimately aimed at strengthening international peace and security.

Mr. Sepelak (Czech Republic): On behalf of the Czech Republic, I wish to congratulate the Chairman and other members of the Bureau on their election. I am convinced that the deliberations of this Committee will be constructive and successful and wish to assure the Chairman that the Czech delegation will support all his activities undertaken in his demanding and responsible post and will do its best to ensure the success of the Committee's work.

Though my country has joined in the position delivered on behalf of the European Union and associated countries by the French presidency, I would like to briefly refer to my country's approach to some issues discussed at this forum.

The Czech Republic supports all practical steps aimed at the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means and the achievement of nuclear disarmament, within multilateral and bilateral talks alike, as well as within unilateral initiatives. In this connection, I would like to mention this year's sixth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Czech Republic regards the results it achieved as positive. We have been supporting all efforts aimed at the achievement of the NPT's universality and implementation. We agree with those countries asking for a speedy fulfilment of commitments arising out of the provisions of the Final Document of the Conference, whose practical implementation will now demonstrate above all the political will of the States parties.

The Czech Republic is also an advocate of a speedy entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and calls on the States that have not yet signed or ratified the CTBT to do so without delay. However, an effective verification of the fulfilment of commitments arising out of the Treaty requires the finalization and practical testing of the International Monitoring System, or at least the greater part of it. To this end, my country has been actively

participating in the building of a network of monitoring stations and a functioning network of information communications.

The Czech Republic is, at the same time, a resolute supporter of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones free of other kinds of weapons of mass destruction. However, their establishment must proceed from the principle of the free will of the participating countries, including the principles approved at the April 1999 session of the Disarmament Commission. In our view, pressing for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions lacking appropriate political conditions, and thus also the necessary consensus of all countries concerned, would not be a very promising step.

In the longer term, the international community is facing threats posed by chemical and biological weapons. Effective implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction requires a speedy finalization of its Verification Protocol. In this connection, the Czech Republic welcomes and supports the initiative of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group of experts, Hungarian Ambassador Toth, and believes that a common approach of all States parties, based on pragmatism and compromise, will allow us to achieve the proclaimed aim.

As to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Czech Republic is among those countries pressing for its universality. We appreciate the results achieved by the secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague in building an effective verification system of compliance with the relevant commitments of the States parties, as well as in the training of personnel and inspectors of the organization, in which my country also actively participates.

As I have already mentioned, the Czech Republic sees the road towards a safer world above all in the continuation of the disarmament process and in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this context, it continues to regard the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems as one of the important factors of strategic stability in the world. Although we perceive the strengthening of defence capacities against a potential attack as an absolutely legitimate step any Government can take, we are of the opinion that the problem of security today is a complex issue interlinking the security interests of many countries. We are worried that the unilateral approach may renew the risk of an arms race with all its negative consequences, which are well known from the cold-war era.

The Czech Republic supports all international efforts to achieve greater transparency and a higher level of exchange of information on the manufacture of and trade in conventional weapons, including the possibility of introducing a new register for certain kinds of small arms and light weapons used for military purposes — extending, via an annex, the existing United Nations Register for "heavy" conventional weapons. My country also supports efforts aimed at greater control of transfers of small arms and light weapons and for the prevention of destabilizing accumulations of these armaments. In this context, my country attaches great importance to the United Nations Conference on illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons, to be held in mid-2001. As for transparency in armaments in general, the Czech Republic, as a regular contributor to the United Nations registers of conventional weapons and military expenditures, agrees that there is a need for member countries to contribute universally to the registers and for the data required to be supplied on a regular basis.

As regards the field of anti-personnel mines, the Czech Republic, as one of the countries that ratified the Ottawa Convention in 1999, regards the universality of the Convention and its consistent implementation as being of the utmost importance. This is why the Czech Republic supports the conclusions of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, which was held this September, and we express our preparedness for the realization of those conclusions.

Let me take this opportunity to briefly mention the situation at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament. As a non-member of the Conference on Disarmament, my country shares the overall disappointment about the course of deliberations in the Conference, or rather about the continued stagnation of talks at that world disarmament forum, in particular because they in fact hinder the implementation of the conclusion of the sixth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We are of the opinion that the revitalization of

that forum requires the combined political will of all the participating countries, especially States that possess nuclear weapons.

In this connection, I would like to express the hope that the Conference on Disarmament member States will make every effort to achieve the opening of substantial negotiations not only on the fissile material cut-off treaty, but also on other topical problems that these States pledged to solve when they adopted the Final Document of the sixth Review Conference of the NPT.

As for the membership of the Conference on Disarmament, my country holds the view that it should not be artificially frozen, and that all countries wishing to participate fully in its work should be allowed to do so without any delay. The Czech Republic is equally convinced that the enlargement of the membership of the Conference on Disarmament would in no way detract from the effectiveness of the negotiations taking place at that forum.

Let me recall that the former Czechoslovakia was among the founding members of the Conference on Disarmament and that the Czech Republic, as one of its successor States, is fully prepared to become a full-fledged member of the Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Committee of my country's continued full support for all efforts aimed at reviving the dynamism of the disarmament process. I also want to express the hope that the deliberations of the First Committee will contribute to the speedy implementation of practical steps adopted at various international forums on disarmament and on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — steps that will bring us closer to a gradual elimination of these weapons and strengthen world peace.

Ms. Bešker (Croatia): It is my pleasure to join in congratulating you, Sir, on assuming the Chair. Our compliments also go to the other members of the Bureau.

This year our session is supposed to have additional importance, because it takes place within the framework of the Millennium General Assembly and in the aftermath of many millennium-related events, including a historic United Nations Millennium Summit.

The Summit and the general debate focused on the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security. Most of the participants in the discussion addressed disarmament issues as a critical element of the evolving international security system.

At the conclusion of the general debate, the General Assembly President appealed to us to

> "maintain the millennium spirit and to proceed with a sense of urgency, not with a sense of business as usual". *(A/55/PV.28)*

He also spoke in support of multilateral solutions that serve the national interests of all States. These two recommendations are very pertinent to the success of our deliberations here.

I would also like to draw attention to the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization. The report succinctly assesses the developments in the field of disarmament and urges the pursuit of measures to enhance global security. We thank the Under-Secretary-General for his inspiring elaboration on the Secretary-General's report in his introductory statement. Croatia welcomes and endorses the views expressed both in the report and in the Under-Secretary-General's remarks.

In the statements so far, many distinguished colleagues made precise inventories of our business, highlighted the pluses and minuses and laid accountability on the appropriate shoulders. I will, therefore, limit my comments to the minimum, while still wishing to reaffirm Croatia's commitment to disarmament and to multilateralism as the optimum method for developing the rule of law in the field of disarmament.

First, the pluses: Croatia has been gratified by the important result of the recent Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. We salute all those who have contributed to it and particularly the "new agenda" initiative States for their initiative and determination.

Croatia recognizes the progress in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe that its relatively smooth verification activities send a positive message to other arms control regimes. We highly value the humanitarian potential of the Ottawa Treaty. As a mine-affected country we are painfully aware that the lack of funds for mine action threatens to compromise this potential.

Secondly, Croatia attaches great importance to regional disarmament and confidence-building measures. We welcome the progress in regional arms control in Europe, especially within the framework of the Dayton Peace Accords, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Forum for Security Cooperation decisions. We are pleased to inform that recently, following successful negotiations between Croatia and Germany, the first functional centre within the Working Table on security issues of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe has been established in Croatia. It will foster the implementation of arms control agreements and regional cooperation related to them.

Now to the minuses: We all know that our achievements fall far short of our commitments and obligations. Growing global military expenditures, the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons in particular — and their delivery systems, the development of revolution in military-affairs concepts are important symptoms of a continued disarmament malady. Our challenge and our responsibility are simple and daunting. They are simple because we all want to live and want our children to live in peace and dignity. They are daunting because we must work within the parameters of uncertain and contradictory political realities and the imperative of moving towards a more secure and better world.

The road ahead is mapped out by the 2000 NPT Final Document, by the forthcoming United Nations conference on illicit trade in small arms and by the existing disarmament legal body. The Department for Disarmament Affairs provides valuable leadership and support. Furthermore, we must factor in the civil society potential. The partnership and cooperation between civil society and committed Governments, which has proven its extraordinary strength in the Ottawa process, is a powerful tool that can help us move forward the arms control agenda.

We can count on massive commitment, expertise and tenacity in working towards our common interests. The political will holds the balance, and we will all have to work hard to engage it. In this respect, it will serve us well to remember the General Assembly President's recommendations. First, we must keep in line with the millennium spirit. This means turning our commitments into action. Secondly, in our search for a more cooperative security order, we must seek multilateral solutions for the benefit of all and to the detriment of no peace-loving country.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to ask those persons who are having conversations in the back of room to consider that this is causing a problem with noise and can be disturbing. Therefore, we would be grateful for the understanding of those persons.

Mr. Kuindwa (Kenya): At the outset let me congratulate the Chairman and members of his Bureau upon their election. My delegation has no doubt that the Chairman will steer the deliberations of this Committee to most fruitful conclusions.

The past year has witnessed mixed blessings for disarmament and international peace and security. On the one hand, the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, held last May, recorded unprecedented success with all the nuclear States resolving, for the first time, to work toward the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. We therefore look forward to the practical implementation of the decisions of the Conference, including the signing of the Treaty by those countries that have not done so.

Kenya, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, considers that the two critical issues, namely nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, should be seriously tackled by the Conference as a matter of priority. For the fourth year running, the Conference on Disarmament remains locked in paralysis because of those member States who opposed substantive discussion on the two key issues and on the fissile material cut-off treaty. We urge them to review their stand so that we can move forward.

The status of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty has not shown further improvement either. The difficulties of a major nuclear power in ratifying the treaty is a great setback. Equally so, the testing of nuclear weapons in South Asia has not assisted the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In a nutshell, nuclear disarmament is in a state of disarray, and our hope is that the spirit of the success of the 2000 NPT Review Conference can prevail in order to make headway in related areas.

A further disquieting development is the proliferation of missile technology. This technology is widespread and spreading still. The rockets, while playing a crucial role in bettering human life in communications and other civilian uses, are at the same time potential vehicles for delivering nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. We urge that this threat be dealt with in a comprehensive and balanced manner, while preserving genuine civilian use. The Missile Technology Control Regime should take the lead in this endeavour.

My delegation welcomes the recent decision by the United States of America on the deployment of national missile defence. Indeed, the deployment of such a system would overturn the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and open a new chapter in the arms race. Kenya believes that security is indivisible and that no one country can achieve unilateral security. Kenya believes that the best defence against missile weapons is their total elimination.

I wish to turn to two issues that are of grave concern to Africa, namely the issue of mines and that of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Since the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction took effect in March of last year, much progress has been made. The manufacture and use of those deadly weapons has diminished, and stockpiles and arsenals have been destroyed. However, numerous countries in Africa continue to suffer from the millions of mines laid in the past; the international community is called upon to render greater and faster assistance for demining and for the rehabilitation of dislocated populations.

The proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons continues to play havoc with efforts for peace, security and development in Africa. Increases in criminal activities, civil wars and numbers of refugees are a direct result of the easy availability of such arms. Kenya hosted a regional conference on small arms and light weapons in March of this year, and is preparing to host a follow-up meeting before the end of the year. The Nairobi process, together with efforts undertaken in West Africa and in southern Africa, will eventually provide an African contribution to the preparatory process for the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. We hope that those efforts will make a difference on the ground in affected regions and will lead to an improvement in the management and control of small arms.

These concerns should prick the conscience of manufacturers and arms merchants and should lead them to abandon the illicit trade in these weapons. Kenya calls for better coordination among regional efforts with a view to exchanging experience and information, and it recognizes the personal contribution of the Chairman of the preparatory process, my brother and colleague Ambassador Carlos Dos Santos of Mozambique.

My delegation pledges its full cooperation in future discussions and decisions on these and other issues relating to disarmament and international security.

Mr. Da Silva (Angola): On behalf of the Angolan delegation, I should like to add my voice to those of preceding speakers in conveying warm congratulations to U Mya Than of Myanmar on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. His diplomatic experience, his wisdom and his knowledge of disarmament issues eminently suit him for that post. My delegation is confident that, under his able guidance, our discussions and deliberations will go smoothly and will be productive. I wish also to assure the Chairman that my delegation will lend its full support and cooperation in ensuring the success of our work.

To Ambassador Raimundo González, I convey my delegation's gratitude and appreciation for the skilful and able manner in which he conducted the affairs of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

We are holding our meetings in an environment of intensified international and regional efforts to achieve our goals. This inspires hope and optimism that we may be able to increase international awareness and move towards general and complete disarmament and towards the final elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The end of the cold war reduced the danger of the possible use of such weapons; it also created a new reality, where there is no longer any need to retain nuclear arsenals or security systems based on competing military alliances and on policies of nuclear deterrence.

We will be examining many issues that are important for the maintenance of international peace and security and for disarmament. We have many documents before us, and more will come. We shall be discussing and adopting many draft resolutions. It is not easy to digest all of that in such a short period of time.

Many aspects of the present international political and security situation are unsatisfactory. We are witnesses to many wars, conflicts and crises that threaten international peace and that require urgent solutions. The persistence of a climate of insecurity and instability in a number of regions cannot be attributed solely to internal causes. It stems also from a weakness in the international security system. We recognize that the effectiveness of action in the area of international peace and security does not depend solely on United Nations activities. It is necessary that there be renewed commitment on the part of each and every State. It is our view that the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels should be part of this commitment to eliminate threats to international peace and security and to eliminate sources of financing for local wars; this can help prevent conflicts which could lead to the violent disintegration of States. In the particular case of the African continent, the continent most affected by the scourge of war, the illicit trade in diamonds has been the primary source of support for wars incited by certain rebel groups with the objective of overturning democratically elected regimes.

Another serious issue affecting international security is the circulation and transfer of the small arms that flow to areas of conflict by way of rebel groups. This takes place with the connivance of certain Governments and of transnational organized crime networks. In this regard, we stress how important good-neighbourliness and the development of friendly relations among States are to the solution of problems among States and to promoting international cooperation.

The lack of international legal instruments with the capacity to control transactions in such arms is actually stimulating the creation of arms markets, above all in Africa. This is leading to an increased number of conflicts and is making their resolution even more difficult. According to United Nations data, the effects of these arms on civilian populations are shocking. They have already resulted in more deaths than the two world wars combined.

In fact, the issues of "conflict diamonds" and of the proliferation of small arms are of special importance for Angola. It is through the sale of illegally mined diamonds that the rebels led by Jonas Savimbi reconstituted the war machine with which they undertook a large-scale military campaign seeking to take power. That war campaign led to a procession of death and destruction, and is the principal reason for the economic instability in Angola.

That scenario is repeating itself in other regions of the world, notably in Africa. The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the tragic loss of life caused by small arms and light weapons in numerous domestic and regional conflicts around the world, especially among children, women and members of other vulnerable groups; they also cause enormous damage to property. There is no such legal framework for reducing or preventing excessive accumulations and transfers of light arms and small weapons, so it is high time for the whole world to come together to tackle the problem of small arms and work towards establishing an international norm to increase international transparency of the illicit trade and to strengthen national legislation governing the arms trade and the possession of weapons.

In this regard, the Government of Angola expresses its full support for the convening of the 2001 United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. In addition, we welcome the decision made at the Cartagena ministerial meeting that the presidency of the Conference should be from one of the countries most affected by the problem of small arms and involved in the process of resolving it. Therefore, we reiterate our position reflected in a declaration of the Non-Aligned Movement. We support the Movement's candidate for the presidency of the Conference.

I turn now to another conventional form of weapon — anti-personnel landmines, which are being used in a number of national and regional conflicts, maiming and killing thousands of people each year. My Government continues to respect its commitment to eliminate landmines, which have decimated our country and people over the years. We believe that a ban on anti-personnel landmines is a matter of priority for the international community. The Angolan

Parliament, as a competent legislative organ, approved ratification of the Ottawa Convention on 25 July this year, and the Convention is now in the office of the Angolan President for ratification, which will be done very soon.

A complete ban on anti-personnel landmines must be our goal. The issue of methods and means of controlling the effectiveness of the application of international humanitarian law, and thus the Ottawa Convention, seems to be at the heart of the concern of many Governments which, like Angola, experience situations of armed conflict. The use of anti-personnel mines is only possible in the theatre of war because these weapons are being produced and delivered, demonstrating the ambiguity in some Governments' attitudes towards humanitarian principles in general. These States continue to supply armed groups, as in the case of the bellicose UNITA in Angola, which, in spite of Security Council resolutions, still has access to the anti-personnel landmines market.

However, despite the fact that measures aimed at the total control of our national borders, and the elimination of the remaining pockets of criminal armed groups, are exerting a positive impact on the search for peace, they are not our only option for the resolution of armed conflict. We will continue simultaneously to implement other actions aimed at guaranteeing full implementation of the Lusaka Protocol, which for us continues to be a valid basis for the resolution of the Angolan problem. In this context, we reiterate our readiness to continue to integrate into our society all those who choose to abandon the option of war.

The international community, and the United Nations in particular, still has an active role to play in the process of restoring peace in Angola, through the continued implementation and strengthening of sanctions against the rebels led by Jonas Savimbi. The recent nomination by the Secretary-General of the mechanism to monitor the application of sanctions against the UNITA rebels, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1295 (2000), will contribute to greater international vigilance regarding possible violations. It will deny bases of support to the armed rebellion in Angola. We hope that all Members of the United Nations will extend their cooperation to this body.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons from the face of the earth is the bedrock of international peace and security. Although we are not happy with the present state of affairs, there is no other alternative but to continue to work to strengthen the regime of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to insist that all States become parties to it and to insist that the nuclear States work much harder towards the realization of the goal: the twenty-first century free of nuclear weapons. The States parties to the NPT are committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons through, on the one hand, renunciation by the non-nuclear-weapon States of any intention to develop nuclear weapons and, on the other hand, the reduction and eventual elimination by nuclear-weapon States of their nuclear weapons.

My delegation welcomes the adoption by consensus on 19 May 2000 of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, presided over by Algeria, for its presentation and strengthening of the regime anchored within the Treaty, and reaffirms the decisions and resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. The "principles and objectives" for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted at the 1995 Conference, reflected the idea of nuclear disarmament, referring explicitly to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons as a common goal of the international community. It is our long-standing, firm belief that the NPT has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament. Both universality and the full implementation of the Treaty are essential in order to consolidate the NPT regime.

Angola supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which represent a significant contribution to the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. They play a major role in strengthening the fabric of the international regime of nuclear non-proliferation and towards realizing the overall objective of nuclear disarmament. It is a source of satisfaction that today the Antarctic Treaty, coupled with the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, have had the cumulative effect of freeing the entire southern hemisphere from the spectre of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear-weapon-free zones set an example and should even add impetus to the nuclear disarmament process and to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. The five nuclear-weapon-free zones have without doubt imprinted upon the

international public consciousness the image of a globe already free of the scourge of nuclear weapons over more than half its surface. It is important for all States parties and signatories to the Treaties to explore and implement further ways and means of cooperation among themselves and their Treaty agencies, and to encourage the competent Treaty authorities to provide assistance to them to facilitate the accomplishment of their goals.

Nuclear disarmament is a responsibility that must be shared by the international community as a whole. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the nuclear-weapon States must assume the major responsibility. In that context, nuclear reduction measures by the two largest nuclear-weapon States, the United States and the Russian Federation, are the most important. Angola appreciates the achievements made by those two States to date and calls upon them to bring the Treaty on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START II) into force without further delay and to commence negotiations on START III as early as possible. As nuclear disarmament is an issue affecting the entire world, non-nuclear-weapon States have a legitimate right to be informed of progress and efforts being made in that area.

I would like to reiterate the Government of Angola's firm belief that disarmament can be achieved only by taking steady and concrete measures. It is my sincerest hope that constructive and fruitful discussions will be conducted along those lines in the First Committee this year.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Petko Draganov, who will introduce the report of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. Draganov (Bulgaria): Allow me, first of all, to extend to you, Sir, my warmest congratulations on your election to the high office of Vice-Chairman of the First Committee, and to wish you every success in the discharge of your responsibilities. It is also a source of satisfaction to see an active member of the Conference on Disarmament in the chairmanship of this important body. You may be assured, Sir, of my full cooperation and support in your endeavours. My congratulations go as well to the other members of the Bureau, who assist you in your important tasks.

I am taking the floor in my capacity as President of the Conference on Disarmament to present to the First Committee the report of the Conference on its work during the 2000 session. That report is contained in document A/55/27, which is before the Committee.

As can be seen from the report and from the official documents, the 2000 session of the Conference on Disarmament could not move ahead, yet again, to a substantive consideration of the items on its agenda. Despite the combined efforts of successive Presidents of the Conference throughout the session, consensus on a programme of work proved elusive due to the persisting divergence of views and priorities attributed to various items on the Conference's agenda.

The Conference did not re-establish or establish any mechanism on its specific agenda items. During the session, a number of delegations, as well as groups of delegations, reiterated or further elaborated their positions on the programme of work of the Conference. Also, intensive consultations led to several proposals being put forward by Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament with a view to developing consensus in this regard, which would have enabled the Conference to start work on substance.

Successive Presidents conducted their consultations on the assumption that there was a general agreement on all of the elements of a programme of work, with the exception of two unsettled issues, namely, nuclear disarmament and the prevention of an arms race in outer space, of which the latter seems to be more problematic than the former. Consequently, most of the attention and effort was focused on working out a consensus on the appropriate mechanisms and mandates for dealing with the two outstanding issues.

Towards the end of the 2000 session, building on the effort of preceding Presidents, Ambassador Amorim of Brazil put forward a proposal that, inter alia, addressed those problems. The proposal envisaged establishing an ad hoc committee to deal with nuclear disarmament and to exchange information and views on practical steps for progressive and systematic efforts to attain that objective. With regard to the prevention of an arms race in outer space, the proposal provided for the setting up of an ad hoc committee to deal with that issue and to examine and identify specific topics or proposals, which could include confidence-building or transparency measures, general principles, treaty commitments and the elaboration of a regime capable of preventing an arms race in outer space. That

proposal was unanimously considered as a basis for further, intensified, consultations. Accordingly, the Conference requested me and the incoming President, Ambassador Westdal of Canada, to conduct intensive consultations during the inter-sessional period and to make recommendations, if possible, that could facilitate the early commencement of work on various agenda items in 2001, bearing in mind the considerable measure of support for the proposal put forward by Ambassador Amorim.

The continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, which in its work deals with the most demanding security issues of the globe, is a source of concern to all its members. The problems facing the Conference are a reflection of the much wider phenomenon of defining the common international priorities in arms control and disarmament in the post-cold-war era. The international community's concerted efforts towards a more propitious political environment, and a spirit of compromise in resolving the global issues at the turn of the millennium, will be crucial in overcoming the current situation in the Conference and will allow us to use the Conference's major function as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. I am hopeful that this session of the General Assembly will provide a much-needed impetus in that regard.

In concluding, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky to the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail and to their small team of highly professional and dedicated staff for their valuable support and assistance to the Conference on Disarmament.

The Acting Chairman (*spoke in Spanish*): We have come to the end of the list of speakers.

Before adjourning this meeting, I would like to remind the Committee that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions will be in a little over a week's time, at 6 p.m. on 13 October. In that regard, the Chair would like to request that traditional draft resolutions and those with financial implications be submitted as early as possible.

I would also like to remind the Committee, as has been done at other meetings, that it is necessary for members to turn off their cellular phones whenever the Committee is meeting.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.